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October 13 eclub Recipe



Chef Walter Manikowski
Currant American
Brasserie

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Currant American Brasserie's Crunchy Ham & Cheese

Serves 4

Currant's Crunchy Ham & Cheese is the restaurant's version of an international favorite, traditionally known as Croque Monsieur (loosely translated from French as "Mister Crunch"). It is believed to have originated in Paris in the early 1900s as a fast snack in cafés and bars. Quickly it became a staple item on brasserie menus in France, America and all around the world.

"Treat your friends and family to this delightful yet easily prepared light brunch, lunch or snack," says Chef Walter Manikowski.

"Toss a mixed-green salad with red onions, tomatoes and a light red-wine vinaigrette as an accompaniment and serve both with a refreshing sauvignon blanc or crisp chardonnay on the patio. They won't soon forget and definitely will come back for more."



Ingredients

- 1 loaf country French bread
- 6 ounces butter (divided use)
- 1 pound spiral cut pit ham (1/4- to 1/2-inch slices)
- 6 ounces béchamel sauce (recipe follows)
- 1/2 pound Gruyere or Swiss cheese (deli sliced)
- 4 eggs fried or poached (optional)

Method

1. Preheat broiler on high and preheat large cast-iron or sauté pan to medium high on top of the stove.
2. Cut French bread to four 1/2- to 3/4-inch slices and brown to golden brown in four ounces of butter in pan. Remove browned bread and set aside on baking sheet.
3. In same pan, add remaining butter and brown ham slices on both sides. Remove ham and evenly distribute (2 to 3 slices) on browned bread.
4. For each open-faced sandwich, ladle 1 1/2 ounces of béchamel sauce over ham and top with Gruyere or Swiss cheese.
5. Place open-faced sandwiches in broiler until cheese is golden brown. Watch carefully as this will happen very quickly.
6. Top with fried or poached egg to make a Croque Madame or "Mrs. Crunch" (optional).

Béchamel Sauce

- 1 quart (4 cups) milk
- 6 teaspoons unsalted butter
- 6 teaspoons flour
- 1 onion chopped
- 1 teaspoon salt

Method

1. Scald milk in a saucepan (be careful not to curdle).
2. In a separate saucepan, melt butter, add flour, combine well and whisk until golden brown.
3. Gradually stir in the scalded milk.
4. Add onion and cook over low heat for about an hour, stirring occasionally.
5. Strain through cheesecloth and serve.